

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

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EXDIS, EYES ONLY FOR OAKLEY FROM HOLBROOKE

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS:PFOR

SUBJECT: EA/SEA SUMMARY ITEMS: MAY 16-20

1. FRANCE BRIEFS ASEAN AMBASSADORS ON PHAM VAN DONG'S VISIT. THE QUAI DIRECTOR FOR ASIA BRIEFED ASEAN AMBASSADORS AS A GROUP MAY 2 ON PHAM VAN DONG'S RECENT VISIT ALONG THE LINES OF THE RUNDOWN GIVEN TO US. THE ASEAN AMBASSADORS WERE VERY PLEASED BECAUSE THE FRENCH TOOK THE INITIATIVE AND HAD TREATED THE ASEAN COUNTRIES AS A GROUP FOR THE FIRST TIME.

2. AID TO VIETNAM: A UN OFFICIAL'S VIEW. UN OFFICIAL VICTOR UMBRIGHT CALLED ON OUR CHARGE IN GENEVA MAY 12 TO REPORT HIS RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH VIETNAMESE AMBASSADOR NGUYEN PHAN LUU, WHO IS HEADING THE SRV'S DELEGATION TO THE HUMANITARIAN LAW CONFERENCE IN GENEVA. LUU MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS TO UMBRIGHT:

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-- ALTHOUGH THE VIETNAMESE HAVE PROVIDED ALL INFORMATION ON MIAS IN THEIR POSSESSION THEY ARE PREPARED TO UNDERTAKE ADDITIONAL EFFORTS;

-- THE VIETNAMESE NOW REALIZE THAT THE PROSPECTS FOR EARLY U.S. ACTION TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE ON A BILATERAL BASIS ARE

POOR BUT WONDER WHETHER THE USG MIGHT FIND IT EASIER TO PROVIDE AID THROUGH MULTILATERAL CHANNELS IN THE NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE;

-- VIETNAM DESIRES, IN ANY EVENT, TO HAVE A "UN UMBRELLA" FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE SO AS TO HAVE GREATER "BALANCE" WITH RESPECT TO SOURCES OF AID.

UMBRIGHT SAID THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS CONTACTS WITH VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS, THE PHRASE "TO HEAL THE WOUNDS OF WAR" WAS NOT USED, AND THERE WAS NO MENTION OF A SPECIFIC AMOUNT OF U.S. ASSISTANCE SOUGHT BY VIETNAM.

3. WORLD FOOD PROGRAM REPRESENTATIVE RECOUNTS THREE-WEEK VIETNAM VISIT. PHILIPPE BOREL, THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAM (WFP) REPRESENTATIVE TO BOTH VIETNAM AND LAOS, RECOUNTED TO A VIENTIANE EMBASSY OFFICER HIS RECENT THREE-WEEK VIETNAM VISIT. DURING HIS VISIT, HE WAS ARRESTED AND BRIEFLY HELD IN CHO LON ON SUSPICION OF BEING AN AMERICAN. HE REPORTED THAT THERE IS STRONG BUDDHIST RESISTANCE TO THE VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES IN HO CHI MINH CITY, INCLUDING REPORTED SELF-IMMOLATIONS. HO CHI MINH CITIZENS WHO GENERALLY SHOW LITTLE ENTHUSIASM FOR THE NEW REGIME RECENTLY EMBARRASSED COMMUNIST OFFICIALS BY ABSTAINING IN DROVES FROM CEREMONIES MARKING THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF "LIBERATION."

4. VIETNAMESE VIEWS OF U.S. AND THAILAND. EMBASSY BANGKOK REPORTS THAT PHAM VAN DONG, IN AN OFF-THE-RECORD
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SESSION WITH A EUROPEAN JOURNALIST, PRIOR TO HIS TRIP TO FRANCE, WAS "VERY ENTHUSIASTIC" ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR U.S.-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS. SOME LOWER RANKING VIETNAMESE SHARED PHAM VAN DONG'S ENTHUSIASM BUT OTHERS WERE SUSPICIOUS OF U.S. INTENTIONS. THE JOURNALIST FOUND A FAIRLY UNIFORM LEVEL OF HOSTILITY TOWARD THAILAND AMONG OFFICIAL VIETNAMESE. THE VIETNAMESE FEEL THE CURRENT THAI REGIME IS NOT ONLY HOSTILE BUT TRANSITORY, AND NOT WORTH NEGOTIATING WITH. THE VIETNAMESE ARE PARTICULARLY UPSET BY WHAT THEY REGARD AS THAI DESIGNS AGAINST LAOS.

5. CHINESE NAP ON GIAP. THE PRC SEEMS TO HAVE DELIBERATELY SNUBBED VIETNAMESE GENERAL GIAP DURING HIS MAY 6-7 PEKING STOP OVER ENROUTE HOME FROM MOSCOW AND EASTERN EUROPE. THE HIGHEST RANKING CHINESE AT THE AIRPORT AND THE BANQUET FOR GIAP WAS NOT EVEN ON THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE. THIS TREATMENT CONTRASTS SHARPLY WITH GIAP'S JANUARY 1976 PEKING STOP OVER WHEN FIVE HIGH-RANKING PRC OFFICIALS GREETED AND FETED HIM. CONGEN HONG KONG BELIEVES THE

CALCULATED LOW-LEVEL TREATMENT FOR GIAP REFLECTS CON-

TINUING CHINESE JEALOUSY OVER THE RELATIVELY BETTER STATE
OF VIETNAMESE-SOVIET RELATIONS.

6. NE WIN'S VISIT TO THE PRC. PRESIDENT NE WIN'S TWO
WEEK STAY IN CHINA APPARENTLY PRODUCED LITTLE OF SUB-
STANCE. THE LACK OF A JOINT COMMUNIQUE DOES NOT
NECESSARILY MEAN, BUT SUGGESTS, THAT THE TRIP WAS A
FAILURE IN TERMS OF REDUCING PRC SUPPORT FOR THE BURMESE
COMMUNIST PARTY (BCP). IT DOES NOT, HOWEVER, SUGGEST A
RADICAL DETERIORATION IN BURMA/CHINESE RELATIONS. NE WIN
MAY NOW HOPE THAT THE GRADUAL ACCUMULATION OF GOODWILL
WILL IN TIME FURTHER REDUCE PRC SUPPORT OF THE BCP. WHILE
THE LENGTH OF THE VISIT WAS LARGELY FOR SYMBOLIC AND
PROTOCOL REASONS, IT DID GIVE NE WIN A CLOSE LOOK AT THE
PRC SYSTEM. WHETHER THE EXPOSURE WILL AGAIN (AS IN 1975,
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BRIEFLY) INSPIRE HIM WITH A NEW ZEAL TO BUILD SOCIALISM,
AND IF SO HOW MUCH HARM THIS WILL DO, IT IS TOO EARLY TO
SAY.

7. CHAIRMAN HUA MEETS INDONESIAN COMMUNIST LEADERS.
CHAIRMAN HUA MET WITH A DELEGATION FROM THE INDONESIAN
COMMUNIST PARTY ON APRIL 18, THE FIRST TIME HUA HAS MET
PARTY REPRESENTATIVES FROM AN ASEAN COUNTRY. THIS
MEETING IS SURE TO RAISE EYEBROWS AMONG THE THREE ASEAN
MEMBERS WHO HAVE FORMAL RELATIONS WITH PEKING. CONGEN
HONG KONG DOES NOT SEE THIS MEETING AS A FORERUNNER OF
INCREASED PRC AID TO SOUTHEAST ASIAN COMMUNIST INSURGENTS.
RATHER, IT CALLS ATTENTION TO THE PRC'S POLICY OF CON-
DUCTING PARALLEL STATE AND PARTY RELATIONS IN SOUTHEAST
ASIA, TRYING TO HAVE ITS CAKE AND EAT IT TOO.

8. PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW INTERVIEWED IN STRAITS
TIMES. STRAITS TIMES ON MAY 17 PRINTED A TRANSCRIPT OF A
MAY 6 INTERVIEW GIVEN BY PRIME MINISTER LEE TO AUSTRALIAN
MICHAEL RICHARDSON. REFERRING TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY
HOLBROOKE'S VOA INTERVIEW IN WHICH HE SAID THAT THE U.S.
CONTRIBUTION TO SOUTHEAST ASIA COULD BE LARGELY ECONOMIC,
LEE SAID THAT THE AMERICANS WOULD HAVE TO CONSIDER THE
ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF MILITARILY SECURE SEA ROUTES. LEE
SAID HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE NEW AMERICAN EMPHASIS ON
HUMAN RIGHTS BECAUSE HE WAS NOT SURE HOW IT WOULD BE
INTERPRETED AND IMPLEMENTED IN PRACTICE. HE WAS, HOWEVER,
PLEASED BY THE HOUSE VOTE OPPOSING WITHDRAWALS OF TROOPS
FROM KOREA AND BY HOLBROOKE'S REQUEST FOR CONTINUED
MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THE PHILIPPINES, INDONESIA, AND
THAILAND. LEE NOTED THAT AMERICANS MUST NOT IMPOSE THEIR

CULTURAL BIASES BUT RATHER MUST ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THERE ARE "MANY AND DIFFERENT ROADS TO A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY." A MAJOR EDITORIAL IN STRAITS ON MAY 18 EMPHASIZED THIS

FINAL THEME.

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9. WEEKLY ISSUES REPORT ITEM: MAY 13 - HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS IN THE PHILIPPINES: MRS. TRINIDAD HERRERA CASE. WE HAVE TAKEN OUR STRONGEST DIRECT ACTIONS TO DATE CONCERNING HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE PHILIPPINES, FOLLOWING RECEIPT OF REPORTS LAST FRIDAY THAT MRS. TRINIDAD HERRERA, A PROMINENT CIVIC LEADER AMONG THE SLUM-DWELLERS OF MANILA AND PRESIDENT OF THE ZONE ONE TONDO ORGANIZATION (ZOTO), HAD BEEN ARRESTED AND TORTURED. ON THE BASIS OF INITIAL INFORMATION TENDING TO CONFIRM THE REPORT, I INSTRUCTED OUR CHARGE, LEE STULL, TO DELIVER A PERSONAL MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT MARCOS. REFERRING TO MY RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH MARCOS IN MANILA ON HUMAN RIGHTS, STULL WAS INSTRUCTED TO SEEK CLARIFICATION OF THE REPORT, NOTE THE POTENTIAL SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES OF U.S.-PHILIPPINE RELATIONS, AND EXPRESS OUR DEEP CONCERN SHOULD THE REPORT PROVE TO BE ACCURATE. MARCOS, ALTHOUGH EXPRESSING CONFIDENCE THAT THE REPORTS WERE NOT TRUE, ORDERED A COMPLETE INVESTIGATION AND INVITED OUR EMBASSY TO HAVE OBSERVERS PRESENT. TWO EMBASSY OFFICERS THEN SPOKE WITH MRS. HERRERA PRIVATELY. ON THE BASIS OF HER APPEARANCE, THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT SHE WAS INDEED TORTURED.

WE HAVE INSTRUCTED STULL TO CONTINUE TO FOLLOW THE CASE CLOSELY AND TO JOG THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT IF THE INVESTIGATION APPEARS TO FALTER OR TURN INTO A COVER-UP. OUR OBJECTIVE IS TO HAVE MARCOS TAKE ACTION AGAINST THOSE INVOLVED IN TORTURING MRS. HERRERA AND OTHER STEPS TO DISCOURAGE THE COMMON PATTERN OF TORTURE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS BY LOWER LEVELS OF THE PHILIPPINE SECURITY FORCES DURING EARLY POST-ARREST INVESTIGATIONS. (THIS WAS APPARENTLY THE CASE WITH MRS. HERRERA.) WE HAVE FOLLOWED UP WITH THE PHILIPPINE AMBASSADOR HERE TO ENSURE THAT HE REINFORCE WITH MARCOS OUR JUDGMENT THAT THIS CASE COULD HAVE VERY SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP.

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THE COMMANDER OF THE PHILIPPINE CONSTABULARY, MAJOR GENERAL RAMOS, INFORMED STULL ON MAY 13 THAT MARCOS HAS ORDERED MRS. HERRERA'S RELEASE TO HER LAWYER, AND THE COURT MARTIAL, WITHOUT PREJUDGMENT, OF ONE LIEUTENANT AND OTHERS WHO MAY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN MALTREATMENT OF MRS. HERRERA. THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT YET ADMITTED THE ACCURACY OF THE CHARGES OF TORTURE NOR IS IT CLEAR HOW FAR THE INVESTIGATION WILL PROCEED.

INTEREST IN MRS. HERRERA'S CASE IS HIGH IN CONGRESS AND IN THE WORLD BANK AND AMERICAN CHURCH GROUPS WHERE MRS.

HERRERA AND HER WORK ARE WELL KNOWN. WE ARE KEEPING CONGRESS AND THE CHURCH GROUPS INFORMED.

IN OUR DISCUSSION WITH CONGRESS AND OUR PUBLIC STATEMENTS WE HAVE REFRAINED FROM IDENTIFYING MARCOS PERSONALLY AS THE "HIGH-LEVEL" OF THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT TO WHOM STULL EXPRESSED OUR CONCERN. VANCE

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